



# Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for December 2011



## A Visit to Wallis Creek Watergarden Nursery in Mulbring

Saturday 10 December at 2:30 pm

The water gardens have been developed on a 10-acre property along Wallis Creek that had previously been extensively logged and grazed, into an interconnected maze of pools, ponds, rainforest, native plants, shade houses and nurseries.

You will see how you can have a quarter-acre of water feature with water lilies, reeds, lotus, and many other boggy and aquatic plants, without exhausting your precious rainwater reserves and see how they train orchids onto tree trunks, among many other things. There is an extensive collection of water, native and insectivorous plants for sale, and a small shop with related products.



## Afterwards there will be a Xmas party at John & Shelagh Brigg's property on Mount View Road, Millfield

The Xmas party will start at 5 pm until everyone gets tired and goes home. Tea/coffee will be available at the party venue. Please bring a chair - there will be some seating available but probably not enough for everyone. Barbecue facilities will be available as well, if you are bringing food to cook. As is usual at our Xmas parties, it would be nice if you could bring a plate to share with others. And BYO grog!

**Directions on how to get to the Nursery and the Xmas Party are overleaf. We will also be arranging car-pooling for those that don't have a vehicle or prefer to share.**

*Everyone is welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.*

For more information contact Jane Mowatt on 4998 8158 or Shelagh Brigg on 4998 0092.

*The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Inc, or any other Landcare agency or government department, but are presented to promote discussion about and the practice of sustainable land use and environmental responsibility.*

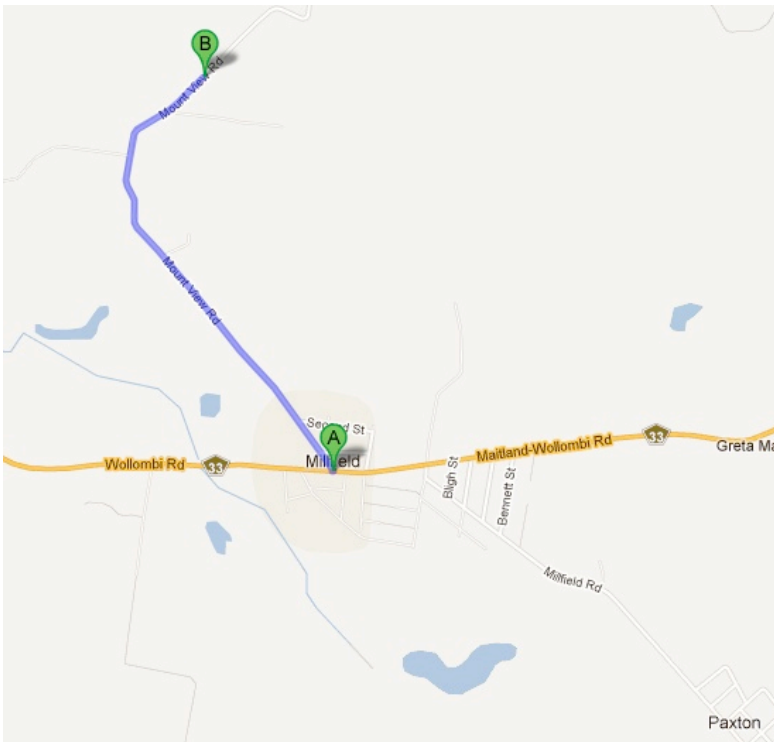
## How to get there...

### Wallis Creek Wartergarden Nursery

Turn off the Wollombi/Cessnock Road at Millfield. Go through Paxton and Ellalong, and take the Sandy Creek Road. At the T-junction at the end of Sandy Creek Road, turn left to Mulbring. Take the Mulbring turn off to the right about half a kilometre along the road. Follow this road to the top of the hill, another T-junction, and turn left. Take the first turn to the right about a hundred metres along the road, into Wallis Creek Lane, and follow this until you get to the Wallis Creek Watergardens, no. 47, which is signposted. It is about 45 kms from Wollombi with an estimated travel time of 55 minutes.



### The Xmas Party



Take the Mount View Road from Millfield (coming from Mulbring, turn right just after passing the Millfield General Store). The property 'Injasuti' is 2.7 km along the road, on the left hand side, no 1498.

The Wollombi Landcare sign will be up so you won't miss the turnoff.

**Maps courtesy of Google, Inc.**

## Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Contacts

**Mail:** Wollombi Valley Landcare Group, Inc. c/o Wollombi General Store, Wollombi 2325

**Items for newsletter:** Graham Taylor - 9981 6317/4998 3326 [wollombi.landcare@gmail.com](mailto:wollombi.landcare@gmail.com)

## Our last Landcare meeting...

The Wollombi Valley Landcare Meeting for October was held at Max Elliott's native plant nursery in Wallaby Gully Road, Ellalong, on the 15th October at 2 -5 pm.

We arrived at about 2 pm and had tea and coffee while Max told us his background - 17 years as a zookeeper in Sydney, and 20 years in horticulture and revegetation, mostly in the Hunter Valley. His property is a 5 acre block, nestling on the west side of Watagan Mountain, Ellalong, frost-free, with a small



watercourse running through. It had been extensively browsed in the past, and had little growing on it, apart from some small trees, mostly spotted gum and ironbark. He has gradually over the years got rid of all the weeds and feral plants, and started his nursery. There are numerous birds that use the area, and he and Alison, his partner and resident artist, have compiled a list of 110 species which they have identified over the years.



We did a tour of his garden vegetable shade house, then the native plant shade houses, all of which are made of black 2" agricultural polypipe, arching over a 3 metre span with a shade cloth covering. The vegetable shadehouse has a cover of shade cloth that goes down to within 1 metre of the ground. He and Alison leave the shade cloth on all year round. He says enough sun gets in through the sides to satisfy the plants' needs. They grow a very healthy kitchen garden there for their own use.

His native plant shadehouses are empty of plants at the moment, as he and Alison have been away touring the backblocks of Australia for two months, and he is just starting to germinate this year's seedlings, which will be ready for planting out in autumn, which is the preferred planting time in this part of the Hunter Valley.

Max showed us all of his propagation techniques. He uses pure sand, perlite and vermiculite, on their own, or in

different mixes of the three, for germination, sprinkles the seed on the surface, then covers with a fine layer of perlite, which absorbs some water and helps to keep the surface damp. The trays are watered daily with a fine spray. He says some of the plants can live in seed trays for up to four years, and are perfectly viable if then transplanted.

When transplanting the seedlings, he uses native potting mix, (which comes from Beresfield - no added fertiliser, and which costs \$110 per cubic metre) and then adds some slow-release native fertilizer with no phosphorous, at a very low rate. When undertaking large-scale revegetation projects, Max uses Hiko trays for germinating, and a Potta Puki planter for planting. Anyone interested in doing large scale planting can request their plants be germinated in Hiko trays

We then did a tour of the wilder parts of his property, including the gully line, which was (almost) running. Lots of donkey orchids were blooming among the grasses. *Melaleuca nodosa* was very conspicuous, in full flower, everywhere.

Everyone was interested in visiting Alison's screen printing workshop, where she specialises in prints of native animals and plants. We finished up back at the tea urn and what was left of the chocolate cake for last questions and a wrap up.

Summary: Max grows local native plants for the lower Hunter region. He uses locally provenanced seeds whenever possible, and is willing to visit properties to collect seed for propagation. He does not do cuttings, as this leads to very poor genetic diversity. You need to contact him early in spring to let him know what you require for planting out in autumn and winter. Plants can be



transplanted six months after germination. You can also get advice about what plant community classification your property belongs to, and what plants would do best there.

#### **Contact details:**

Max Elliott - Horticulturalist and Revegetation Specialist  
**Grow Local Native Flora Nursery**

No. 10, Lane Q4, Wallaby Gully Road, Ellalong, 2325 NSW  
Phone: 02 - 4998 1069 Mobile 0400 744 289

Web: [www.growlocalnativeplants.blogspot.com](http://www.growlocalnativeplants.blogspot.com) and [www.maxelliott.blogspot.com](http://www.maxelliott.blogspot.com)  
also [www.thewallabygullybabbler.blogspot.com](http://www.thewallabygullybabbler.blogspot.com)

Shelagh Brigg

## **Ticks, Leeches, and other nasties - and how to cope with their bites.**

With all the rain we have been having recently, as well as the summer we didn't have last year, there is a bumper crop of wee beasts willing and able to feed of any passer-by in the bush. Where they bite, they leave a residue of unwanted biological chemicals, to which our bodies have evolved to react, leaving streams of blood (leeches) and a bite spot which can itch intolerably for weeks, or leaving parts of themselves (ticks, when the head stays behind) either way leaving a bite spot which itches for weeks. No matter what treatment I used the itch remained, and left a scab that I unconsciously scratched off daily for literally up to six weeks or longer. Taking antihistamines helped, temporarily. When I stopped taking the pills, the itch came back.

There are other irritating things in the bush - native nettles, which can sting through denim, the burning itch of which will stay with you for two days minimum; or the large black, brown or red ants. Some of their bites are also two day monsters, while others are more fleeting, lasting only for about half an hour, but make up for that in intensity of pain delivered.

Ticks first. The very tiny little ticks, which are barely visible to the naked eye before they have started feasting, make huge lumps on me when they bite. I know when I have one as the area around the bite gets a large lump and is very painful, especially when around the head and neck. They are quite difficult to remove as they are so small, although they can be seen after they have ingested some of you. Turpentine, methylated spirits, Vaseline, tea-tree and eucalyptus oils, have all been recommended to me as a means of ridding myself of them (this kills them by suffocation, as they breathe through their skin), but I find that although this does indeed kill them, they remain latched onto me. We have found that a magnifying glass and a pair of fine tweezers usually works all right at removing the carcasses. The itch still has to be dealt with.

I have been (reliably?) told that the tiny ticks are simply juveniles of the red, shell-back ticks. I find that scraping the bigger ones off with a (clean) fingernail usually gets them off, but have had a few disasters where the body came away leaving the head buried in me. I still have to find a way to deal with this - thus I am very careful when scraping them off me - I no longer resort to gripping and pulling them. This still leaves the residual itch to be dealt with.

I tried all sorts of remedies, even old-fashioned ones that seemed like magic. One which I found successful was covering the bite spot with a Bandid - this stops clothing rubbing the spot and aggravating the itch reaction. It worked even better when I experimented by dosing the Bandid with a dab of honey. I don't know why this works, but think maybe it could be due to osmosis, the strong honey drawing out whatever it is that the ticks inject into one.



The second part of my successful treatment came from a trivial and frivolous gardening book that I read, which nevertheless stayed in my mind because it finally gave me a good recipe for stopping the itching long term. The author recommended not taking anti-histamines, which she claimed simply masked the local irritation, but instead taking large doses of vitamin C (up to 2000mg/day) for a few days. I tried this, and to my amazement it worked - three days later I removed the Bandid and there was no itchiness thereafter.

The same treatment seems to work on leeches. I have never had a leech bite go feral on me, as other people have, causing cellulitis, which makes one feel really sick, needs a trip to the doctor, a course of antibiotics, and several weeks of recuperation. Once again I think the honey might act as a poultice, drawing out what the leech injects. Also, honey is considered by some to have antibiotic properties.

Whatever, leech and tick bites are no longer a source of long-term irritation to me. Which leaves me with nettle stings and ant bites to deal with. Anybody got any ideas?

Shelagh Brigg

## Common Wallaroo, *Macropus robustus robustus*

I recently had the opportunity to photograph some eastern wallaroos grazing on my front lawn and thought that Landcare members might be interested in seeing close ups of one of our local species of kangaroo.

The wallaroo in our area is the eastern subspecies of the Common Wallaroo. Another subspecies, found more inland, is called the Euro.

Wallaroos are the second largest of our local kangaroos/ wallabies, with only the Grey Kangaroo, *Macropus giganteus*, reaching greater height and weight. Unlike the Grey Kangaroo, wallaroos prefer the narrow valleys with a good supply of caves, overhanging ledges and rocky slopes. They can manage for long periods without drinking and are less likely to be found in groups.



When seeing males and females together it is easy to be fooled into thinking that they are two separate species. The male wallaroo can weigh up to 46.5 kg (females only up to 25 kg) and have a body and head length of up to 1100mm plus a tail of another 900mm (females 749mm).

The male wallaroo is very dark grey with a distinctive white chest (Photo 1) His fur is long and shaggy and adults are thickset, hence the name robustus. The females are a light grey, with short fur and a delicate build (Photo 2), closely resembling the female Grey Kangaroo. The distinction between males and females is obvious even in very young animals. Photo 3 is clearly of a young male already exhibiting the darker shaggier coat.



### References

Cronin, L. (2008), *Cronin's Key Guide to Australian Mammals*, Jacana Books.  
Strahan, R. (ed.) (1983), *The Australian Museum Complete Book of Australian Mammals*, Angus & Robertson,

Would anybody like to contribute photographs of other species of kangaroo or wallaby from our local area?

## Landcare at Wollombi Valley Country Fair

Once again Wollombi Landcare were invited to have a stall for the two days of the Wollombi Fair (Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 November). The weather was much more agreeable than last year and Graham Taylor's roster worked beautifully. There was a great deal of interest in the wombat section of the stall and we were able to speak to quite a few people who had not previously known that the mange on their wombats could be easily treated.



Special thanks to Louise and Chris who provided the information and impetus for the wombat display as well as being present for a considerable portion of the weekend.

We would also like to welcome Rose Schick who joined Landcare - welcome Rose.

Jane Mowatt

With the Fair now over, we would like to thank all those who kindly offered to assist in manning the Landcare stall;

Jane Mowatt

Louise Hicks & Chris Jackson

Louise Gee

Andrew Mortlock

Shelagh Brigg

Janet Ho

Angus Jon

Pamela McCarthy

with special thanks to Jane who brought everything to the site on Saturday morning and helped setup then returned to take everything away in the afternoon and then repeated the process again on Sunday.

Graham Taylor

## Support available for natural resource management activities

Are there any particular projects or activities, including educational field days and workshops, training courses, forums and conferences, tree planting days, or production and distribution of educational publications that you think our Landcare group should be involved or offering to our members?

The Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority offers financial assistance for such activities, so if you think there is something we should be doing in our valley for our members then let us know and we can discuss proposals them with you and talk to the CMA.

From: Drew Hutton <[dhutton97@gmail.com](mailto:dhutton97@gmail.com)>  
Subject: [LTGA] Media release - ABC congratulated on coal seam gas site  
Date: 24 November 2011 8:40:01 AM AEDT  
To: Drew Hutton <[dhutton97@gmail.com](mailto:dhutton97@gmail.com)>  
Bcc: [committee@lockthegate.org.au](mailto:committee@lockthegate.org.au)  
Reply-To: [committee@lockthegate.org.au](mailto:committee@lockthegate.org.au)

## ABC congratulated on coal seam gas site

The Lock the Gate Alliance today praised the ABC for the quality of its information on coal seam gas presented on its web site ([www.abc.net.au/coalseamgas](http://www.abc.net.au/coalseamgas))

Lock the Gate president Drew Hutton said the ABC deserved the highest praise for cutting through much of the hype surrounding the issue and presenting the costs and benefits in an objective and interesting manner.

Mr Hutton said he was particularly impressed by the site's mapping that shows the positions of many of the coal seam gas wells in Queensland and New South Wales with back-up information on issues like impacts on underground water, fracking and the economic benefits and costs.



"This is brilliant research by ABC investigative journalist Wendy Carlisle that deserves to be read by all Australians," Mr Hutton said.

"The only addition I would like to see added to the site is information on key companies like Arrow Energy, QGC, Origin, Santos and AGL and a map showing the names and contacts of Lock the Gate groups and other groups concerned about the industry.

Everyone should look at it before the coal seam gas industry, alarmed that such clear information is getting to the public, starts applying pressure to have it removed."

### The coal seam gas rush

Updated November 30, 2011 13:59:57

Produced by ABC Radio Multiplatform & Content Development, and presented by ABC News Online.

ABC Radio

Coal seam gas has emerged as a major industry in Australia in little more than a decade.

The scale and speed of its growth has been nothing short of astonishing: billions of dollars have poured into regional areas; new jobs have been created; state and national coffers have swelled; export contracts have been signed and sealed; massive liquefied natural gas facilities have been approved for construction at regional ports.

Farmers fear they are losing control of their land. Miners and some politicians say coal seam gas offers a much greener energy choice. Environmentalists and other politicians have cast doubt on those claims.

The ABC's data journalism project has pulled together information from dozens of sources to provide an insight into the promise and the dangers inherent in the coal seam gas rush.

#### Did you know:

- it is estimated there will be 40,000 coal seam gas wells in Australia
- conservative estimates suggest coal seam gas wells could draw 300 gigalitres of water from the ground each year?
- the industry could produce as much greenhouse gas as all the cars on the road in Australia?
- modelling suggests the industry could produce 31 million tonnes of waste salt over the next 30 years?

#### Quick guide

- How is coal seam gas mined?
- How does fracking work?
- What is the gas used for?

This is a great website with a wealth of information and clear and straightforward explanations about coal seam gas. One of the great features are interactive maps showing every lease held by the mining and exploration companies and every coal seam gas exploration or exploratory well drilled that has been drilled in Australia. Try it! Zoom in on Wollombi and Broke then look at Queensland!



LOCK THE GATE  
Alliance